



The Rev. JOHN MURRAY, A.M.
late Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, in
NEWBURY-PORT.

Born 22, May 1742. Died 13, March 1793.

S.H.H.S.

4985. cc. 4
2
A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN

NEWBURY-PORT, APRIL 7, 1793;

OCCASIONED BY THE MUCH LAMENTED DEATH
OF THE

REV. JOHN MURRAY, A. M.

PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE MARCH 13, 1793,

IN THE 51ST YEAR OF HIS AGE.

[PUBLISHED AT THE DESIRE OF THE HEARERS.]

BY JAMES MILTIMORE, A. M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN STRATHAM.

EXETER:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY HENRY RANLET,

1793.

THE HISTORY OF THE

BRITISH MUSEUM

AND THE

ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND IRELAND

AND THE

ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND IRELAND

AND THE

ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN



PRINTED AT THE

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE

BRITISH MUSEUM

AND THE

ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND IRELAND

AND THE

ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND IRELAND

AND THE

ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND IRELAND

AND THE

ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN

A FUNERAL SERMON.



FUNERAL SERMON, &c.

REV. XIV. 13.

AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAYING UN-
TO ME, WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH
DIE IN THE LORD, FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA,
SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM
THEIR LABORS; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW
THEM.



THE desire of happiness is natural and universal. In the human breast it is a first, a leading principle—A principle, which is coeval with our existance: and which we cannot renounce, without, at the same time, renouncing humanity. Accordingly, all mankind for these six thousand years, have been in search after happiness, in the general desire of which the fall made no alteration, though it has miserably perverted our notions of it. In this, the sons of men, when left to their own choice, are unhappily mistaken.—For alas! they are apt to seek for bliss where it is not to be found, and shun the place where it is.—

6 A FUNERAL SERMON.

Thus, they are expanded into a thousand desires, after as many different objects, and their hearts are distracted and divided.

To enlighten and rectify our notions of human felicity, is the business of real religion. Religion seeks to correct our false opinions, and to direct us in the straight and certain, though narrow way, that leads to life, felicity and glory. Its opinion, therefore, differs widely from that of the world.

BLESSED, in the account of the world, are those who live in affluence, pleasure and ease; who have the means of gratifying every appetite; and who withhold not from themselves any joy. Blessed, will worldly minded men say, are those who are permitted to prolong life to its latest date. But more especially blessed, would the sensual and ungodly sinners account themselves, if they might be allowed to spend their immortality on earth. These men are apt to fancy, that could they make their worldly prosperity eternal, they would be eternally happy.

VERY different from this, is the language of the Spirit of God. Blessed, in the account of that unerring, all-discerning Judge, are they, "whose sins are pardoned, whose transgressions are forgiven. Yea, blessed are the men, to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*

In the gospel of Matthew is found a collection of characters, upon whom the divine benediction is pronounced: And to that collection, the text subjoins its sacred declaration. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

In this mysterious book, the Spirit by the revealer, depicts the awful issue of an impenitent continuance in the ways of sin; and fixes on the human mind, deep impressions of the triumphs of the righteous, and the blessedness of the redeemed.

* Psalm xxxiii. 1, 2.

A FUNERAL SERMON. 9

The phrase, of consequence, which we now meditate, is applicable to any persons who die, united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You need not be told that I now think of something, far different from that union which is visible, or by profession only. Visible union, I acknowledge, is not without its blessings. Hence we are distinguished from the rest of the world. We enjoy a right to the means of grace. We have access to the word and ordinances of Christ. And hence the Church becomes entitled to his presence, who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. But when I speak of union to the Lord Jesus Christ, as fundamental to future bliss, I would be understood to intend, that union, which is connected with real, internal, everlasting blessings, and which must of necessity be real, vital, spiritual and everlasting:—a union, which is effected by the creative energy of the holy Spirit. To accomplish this union, the Spirit of all revealed truth, presents to the sinner's mind, that glorious Christ which the gospel freely offers, and at the same time, effectually touches the will, losing it from its natural engagements and bondage, and turning it to spiritual and holy objects. When by the agency of the holy Ghost, the will is thus loved, it determines all for Christ—makes an ardent choice of him as a seen, complete Redeemer; on him the soul most freely rests, and in him the affections immediately centre. The will, thus bowed to choose and embrace Jesus Christ, in all his offices, trusts in him alone, well pleased with his way of saving sinners and yearning for his whole salvation. On this important moment, Jesus the Divine bridegroom espouses the believer to himself. To him the soul becomes united—And in his great redemption, the new-born child of God is interested.

10 A FUNERAL SERMON.

SUCH is that work of divine grace, by which souls are regenerated and so united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is that union which is thus effected. Those who are thus united to Christ, are the persons who at death, die in the Lord. And these, it follows, are the characters alluded to in my text.

I AM not unaware, that it has been argued by some, that the text refers to the noble army of Martyrs who have been called to suffer unto death, and under the hand of cruel persecution to seal and witness their religion with their blood, and these, it is asserted, are the characters intended—these the persons who die in the Lord. Nor am I unaware of the force of the criticism, upon which this opinion is rested. It is admitted, that the preposition, *en*, rendered *in*,—"in the Lord,"—often signifies *for*; as in the first epistle of Peter, iv. 14—"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye."*

THE righteous God will most assuredly reward the virtue and the sufferings of those holy men, who have bled and died in the cause of religion. Such as are put to death for adhering to the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not be losers. They shall be blessed; not only on account of that glory into which they shall pass, but of that rest, which their death shall give them, from the troubles and calamities of persecution.

BUT I cannot see reason for restricting this animating description of the happiness of Saints in death, to Martyrs in general, nor even to the holy Prophets and Apostles, who were put to the most excruciating torture for the sake of their religion. Though the sacred scriptures have given the most

* EN ONOMATI CHRISTOU.

A FUNERAL SERMON. 11

ample testimony that those who die for the sake of Christ and his cause, shall be blessed in their death; yet, bliss in death, does not belong to them, exclusively of other Christians.

As all real Christians are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, and vitally united to him who is the author and the finisher of faith; they all have founded for them a valid title to dying in the Lord. On that memorable day in which their souls were married to Jesus Christ, their title to bliss in death and after it for ever, was judicially recognized, by God their Bridegroom's father. All that work of grace which is then begun and will be carried on by means of the word and providence of God, is designed to prepare the humble Christian for his change, and give him a glorious advantage in the conflict with death. When the human constitution is breaking up, when every resource which nature has opened begins to fail, and the immortal spirit is just upon the point of launching into eternity—in this all-important moment, the man of true religion, is calm and composed.—Yes, his soul is comforted with the enlivening presence of the redeeming Jesus. This is the happy distinction to which all those divine souls are entitled, who now are savingly united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Dying in the Lord, they possess those hopes and joys which religion alone can inspire.

FROM that general view which has thus been taken of this subject, it is easy to infer the following things,

I. THAT to die in the Lord, is to meet death in a state of peace with God, and of subjection of heart to his holy will. Nothing but real inward Christianity can secure us bliss in death. And nothing can be called, real, inward Christianity; but that

12 A FUNERAL SERMON.

which involves the conversion of the heart to the love of God—to faith in Jesus as our Mediator and Advocate—to an humble reliance on the merit of Christ's death, and a diligent imitation of his amiable example. He who is reconciled to God—interested in Christ—and hath received the holy Spirit as the seal of his forgiveness and the pledge of immortality, is a man of true religion. And the man of true religion is secure of that glorious advantage which religion affords in the hour of death.—He is at peace with God; and surely death cannot injure him. In death he must be blessed.

2. To die in the Lord, is to depart out of this life, in possession of a sacred serenity of soul and composure of mind. The child of God, it must be confessed, may labor under doubts and fears about his interest in the divine favor and his title to future felicity. But still, there is an important difference between the discouragements of timorous Christians, and the keen, the piercing anguish which the guilty sinner feels, who at that awful moment is conscious to himself, that he has lived in sin, and is yet an enemy to God and religion. And although we are constrained to admit, that God may, for a time, hide his face from the Christian, and suffer Satan to buffet him with sore temptations, yet for the most part, the storm after a while subsides, and peace is restored to the troubled breast. “Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.”* I mean not to assert that all those who are Christians indeed, are rapt to the highest extacy with future prospects. But thus much, I think must be admitted, that all sincere souls, upon the faith of the gospel and a serious review of their own case and state, will see reason for calmness and

* Psalm xxxvii. 37.

A FUNERAL SERMON. 13

composure. A seasonable reflection upon the great truths of the gospel, will sustain the upright heart. A believing apprehension of the glorious promises of the bible, must revive the languid Christian, reconcile his mind to the will of God, and inspire it with a sweet serenity.

3. To die in the Lord, is to pass the Jordan of death, supported by gospel faith. Glorious things are said of the grace of faith, in the sacred scriptures. Faith is the victory which overcomes the world. And through faith the feeble saint "waxes valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the aliens."*

FAITH has to conquer through the open violence, and the sly intrigues of all its enemies. In this manner, Christians in former days overcame. And thus, Christians, you must conquer still. The field of battle is the same, faith's enemies the same, our sinful natures, personal impotence, urgent necessities and Almighty helper, all the same.

BUT it is in death, especially, that divine faith is victorious. There it conquers, the conqueror. Its shield not only quenches the fiery darts of the adversary, it repels the arrows of death. Never is the usefulness and importance of faith, more fully realized, than in the closing scene of life. The glories of this grace, are exhibited with additional lustre, in the dying Christian, who fearlessly enters the valley of the shadow of death. The strength and support which faith communicates to the expiring child of God, most sensibly discover its genuine worth. Like a ray from heaven, faith enlightens the believer's path, through the darksome vale of death, and enables him to behold the hills of salvation which lie beyond. Here we see the waters of this Jordan parted by faith, and the Christian passing

14 A FUNERAL SERMON.

composedly forward, to take possession of the promised land. When presumptuous unbelievers are buried in the mighty waters, faith conducts the believer through the foaming waves, always in peace and sometimes in triumph. Yes, and then, faith gives possession of that blissful inheritance which the lively poet so sweetly describes.—

*“ There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign ;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.*

*Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dress'd in living green :
So to the Jews old Can'an stood,
While Jordan roll'd between.”*

FINALLY, to die in the Lord, is to leave the stage of this world in the triumphs of faith. This is the happiness of some Christians. They can say, “ we know whom we have believed, and we are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day.”*—“ They are sealed with the spirit of promise”†—Happy souls ! Glorious state ! It is heaven brought down and begun on earth. How fully does every such death witness the truth of the religion of Christ, and recommend it to the world ! How animating the language of the Christian taking leave of the world and all in it ! In these, or words like these, he pours out the fulness of his heart. “ The scenes of life are passing away, but I do not regret their

* 2 Tim. 1. 12.

† Eph. 1. 13.

A FUNERAL SERMON: 15

loss. Death is fast approaching, but I am not afraid to die. The sovereign God of grace, if I am not greatly deceived, has put the matter of my safety in Christ, out of all doubt to my soul. He has shewed me his glory in the face of Christ: And O how ravishing! how transporting! All other glory is meanness, all other beauty, mere deformity compared with it. Never, never did the person of Christ appear to me more lovely—more heavenly—more divine. My flesh and my heart cry out for him. He is my all in all. I see in him, all I want—all I need—all I desire. His office-fulness contains all my treasure; and my heart gives up all for this pearl. Never did I see the gospel way more plain—more worthy of God, or safe for man.—Never did my soul more freely, nor more fully choose the salvation which it reveals. I now desire to die, laying my hand, and resting my soul, upon that gospel forever. Here, on this rock I repose securely. And here the sweet peace of God possesses all my soul. Now could I triumph in the Lord my righteousness, even were I standing at the bar of God. For Jesus and his divine blood is all my ransom—Jesus and his all-perfect righteousness my only refuge.—This ransom and this refuge will I plead at the throne of grace, before the seat of Judgment. O the riches of the grace of God! The freeness of his love! The fulness of his mercy! It strikes me dumb! Angels speak my thoughts! Eternity will be short enough to express my gratitude and celebrate his praise.”

WE proceed now to the next object of this discourse, which is,

2. By some plain arguments to prove that those who die in the Lord are blessed. Upon this part of my theme I mean not to detain you long. It is

unnecessary: I will only take liberty to say, that this truth may be argued,

1. From the Divine declaration. The God who cannot lie has said—The Spirit of all revealed truth has said, that those who die in the Lord are blessed: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit.” Their security, you see, for the enjoyment of this bliss, is as infallible as the unfailing word of God. Nor is this the doctrine of this text alone. The sacred scriptures, both of the old and new testament, afford the fullest confirmation of this truth.

THE Patriarchs, we are told by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, “desired a better country, even an heavenly.”* “Job knew that his Redeemer lived.”† “Moses had respect to the recompence of reward.”‡ David rejoiced in the certain hope of “beholding the face of God in righteousness.”§ Isaiah assures us that “the righteous shall enter into peace; that they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”¶ Daniel tells us that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.”¶ And the Prophet Hosea with triumph foretells our redemption from death and the grave.”**

BUT in the New Testament, life and immortality are brought to light. The Lord Jesus Christ, when he was about to leave his disciples, comforted them with this assurance, “I go to prepare a place for you.”†† And his whole Church on earth he now addresses in this animating stile; “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”‡‡ The Apostles also declare in the

* Heb. xi. 16.

† Job. xix. 25.

‡ Heb. xi. 20.

§ Ps. xvii. 15.

¶ Isa. lvii. 2.

¶ Dan. xii. 2.

** Hos. xiii. 14.

†† John xiv.

‡‡ Luke xii. 32.

most positive terms, "that God who cannot lie, had promised eternal life before the world began, and that he had confirmed this promise by an oath."* Hence one of them stating his own experience and prospects, says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."† And speaking of the Christians at Corinth, including himself with them; he asserts: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."‡

BUT to proceed, the truth before us might be argued—

2. FROM the sweet experience of the children of God in this life: Every present taste of divine pleasure with which the Christian is refreshed; every cheering ray of celestial light, which breaks in upon his mind; every living spark of divine love, which glows in and warms his heart; is a present evidence of his interest in the salvation of God—a present anticipation of heaven's felicity—and therefore a sure earnest of that enjoyment in death and forever.—Will the God of mercy, of love and faithfulness, permit the souls of believers, while in the body, to drink of the rivers of divine pleasure—to taste and see that the Lord is gracious—to make their boast of God—and triumph in the hope of the glory of Christ: and at death suffer all their joys to go down under a cloud of remediless darkness—and themselves to be everlastingly cut off from those ravishing enjoyments? It is inconceivable—I had almost said impossible.

WHAT is the language of every interview with God in prayer? What means the glowing of the

* Tit. i. 2. Heb. vi. 17.

† Phil. i. 21.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 71

heart in spiritual meditation? What means that communion of sentiment and affection which Christians are, on some occasions, permitted to enjoy with God? Or what that inward delight and joy they feel, from the pure satisfaction, of being interested in his favor, and in giving back their hearts to God in cheerful sentiments of gratitude and love? Shall I attempt an answer to these questions? I confess I know not how to answer them, without asserting, that the exercises to which they refer, are the clear demonstration of the reality of invisible enjoyments. Are not these enjoyments of the same nature with those we hope for at death, but especially in heaven? And will these be afforded now, and those denied then? Will the goodness of God put a cheat upon his regenerate children, in a matter of such vast importance as eternity? Far be the thought from us. The highest present experience, falls far below future bliss. The tallest saint on earth is but a child—a babe—an atom. Of the sons of God, the beloved disciple makes the following remark: “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.” *

3. THE truth suggested in my text, might be argued from the sentiments of sinners, in the days of their prosperity; and from their conflicts and their cries, in the hour of death. What else can be the meaning of Balaam's wish? Did he not speak the sense of his heart, when he exclaimed, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his”? To die as the righteous die, is indeed desirable, the wicked themselves being judges. A single glance of death, will force an acknowledg-

* 1 John iii. 2.

ment of this sort, from the lips of ungodly men. There is, I believe, scarce a man in the midst of life, who does not secretly wish, in the hour of death, to possess those hopes and joys, which religion alone inspires. In the cry of the foolish Virgins, a confession of this truth, was plainly involved. "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." Yes, and dying sinners are sometimes heard exclaiming—O! how happy are the saints I once despised! O that I were in their case!!!—And though some sinners may not be roused from their security, and may have no bands in their death; yet I am persuaded, every reprobate ghost in the infernal world, will one day justify the children of God, for their serious attention to "the things which belong to their peace." In the prayer of the wretched Dives, this thought is strikingly suggested. "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.—If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."*

It remains that we now enquire,

3. WHAT are the things in which the bliss of those who die in the Lord, does consist? To this enquiry it must be answered, that their bliss is constituted, partly by freedom from evils, and partly by the possession of positive good.

It consists in a full, an everlasting immunity from every evil and imperfection.

1. THE saint dying in the Lord Jesus Christ, is instantly freed, forever freed from all sin. For this, among other reasons, death is permitted to reign over the servants of God; that sin may thereby be utterly abolished. The wisdom of God, in

* Luke xvi. 27, 28, 30.

this dispensation, is apparent. It was by sin that death entered into the world. And it is fit that sin should be completely extinguished by death. Accordingly, on that important moment which releases the souls of believers from the body, the disencumbered spirit is all life and purity. Every irregular desire is slain; every sinful propensity is destroyed; and every stain purged away. And moreover, since it was in the body the soul first learned to sin,—since the body hath been its tempter as well as its instrument in most of the sins which have been committed; it must seem founded in reason, that perfect liberty from sin should follow the soul's release from the body.

IN the present life the best of men have great cause loudly to complain of evil propensities, deeply rooted prejudices and lawless passions; and unutterable is their distress on these accounts. When the clouds of sin now thicken around their souls; when spiritual diseases are all they can see; hardness of heart—blindness of mind—stupidity—unbelief—wandering—deadness—weakness—fickleness—coldness—then they sigh—they groan—they complain of their sinful, deceitful hearts—and cry, ardently cry to God for salvation—O Lord deliver us from the body of this death. Let not sin reign in our hearts forever. How shall our corruptions all be slain? When shall it once be? We long, we languish for that complete redemption.

WHY then should the saint of God repine at death? As justly might the mourning prisoner spurn the friendly hand that unties his fetters and throws down his prison walls. As well might the espoused Bride regret the approach of that long wished-for hour which shall present her to her faithful Bridegroom. Perfectly blessed is the state into which

death shall translate the righteous. That freedom from sin, of which we have been treating, is one ingredient in their bliss. Then their moral spots shall be all washed out. Their natures thoroughly refined from the dross of sin, shall attain a faultless excellency. Every weight shall fall off—every disease be healed, and every corruption totally eradicated.

2. THE saint dying in the Lord, is set free from all temptations of satan. To this region of sin and sorrow all the devices of this dread foe, for ensnaring the people of God, are mercifully confined. Here Satan has his range. He goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Long practised in the ways of guile this subtil enemy lays his temptations, artfully to coincide with the temper and prevailing propensity of the hearts of men. And thus even good men are alas, too often entangled and cast down. And for them, while in the body there is no safety but in resistance. Kind is the office which death performs. It puts the believer out of the reach of that restless foe. It wafts him up to that city of the living God, into which Satan cannot come—into which no temptation can ever enter. Hence saith the Spirit, “the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*

3. DYING saints are rescued from the frowns and flatteries of the world. Good men are now expectants of everlasting glory. They are at the same time inhabitants of this mortal state. Their abode in this ensnaring world, is attended with many circumstances which are manifestly calculated for the trial

of their spirits. The best Christians are liable to form a mistaken estimate of the things of time. And unhappy is the influence of a mistake in this matter. This error is one pregnant cause of that languor and formality of which the people of God often complain. This weakens their hands, and enfeebles their endeavors after improvement and progress in the ways of God. The allurements of sense, the delusive flatteries of an imaginary good, and the attractive charms of the things of time, often assault the humble Christian and try to draw his heart astray. An excessive passion for sensible objects, is exceedingly injurious, not only as it disturbs the composure of the mind, engrosses too much of our time, and hurries us into unlawful, at least, doubtful and dangerous pursuits; but especially as it palls the appetite for refined and spiritual enjoyments. Justly then does the Christian consider the world as his enemy: And long to have its strong dominion fairly solved.

AND moreover, when the world frowns, and perplexity, sorrow and trouble encompass the man of God on every side, he is liable to dejection and dismay. His heart is ready often to sink under the pressing weight of a frowning world. Encompassed with objects which appear gloomy and distressing, the reasonings of nature too easily overpower the dictates of faith and religion. Hence, even religious men, with too great facility, turn aside from the honorable and secure path of virtue—allured by the flatteries, or terrified by the frowns of this world.—But at death an end shall be put to every danger of this sort. No more shall the pleasant or terrifying scenes of this temporal life attach the Christian's heart or fright him from his duty. Enticing objects shall no more call away his thoughts from eternal

things. No charm of worldly pleasure shall ever lull him into spiritual security. Nor shall the dark, the dismal scenes of this mortal life, ruffle the serenity of his soul; or produce a moment's pause in bliss.

4. SUCH as die in the Lord are for ever released from all pains, distresses and complaints—from sickness, sorrows and straits. By the frailties of life, the people of God, are often so deeply oppressed, that they are well nigh ready to sink beneath their weight. Thus their thoughts are frequently broken and confused—their attention disturbed and interrupted; and their powers of reflection enfeebled. In this state of things we naturally expect to find the mind greatly indisposed to attend, either to the glorious principles of Christian doctrine, or to the important duties of Christian practice. Nor can the good man hope for a perfect freedom from this snare, until he bursts this fleshly prison and rises above the visible skies. But when this life expires, all trials of this description are for ever at an end: Then if we are found amongst the followers of the Lamb of God, every occasion of distress is finished. Survey the mansions of the blessed—Look through the streets of the new Jerusalem, that city of the living God; and there you will find none of those evils, nor any danger of their ever entering there. No seeds of distemper are sown there—no chilling ague—no burning fever—no torturing disease—no wasting consumption, shall be ever known in that blissful country. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”*

* Rev. xxi. 4.

24 A FUNERAL SERMON.

BUT the time requires that I go on now to make mention of some of those positive blessings which Christians realize at death and after it.—And of some only. For to condescend on the several particulars which occur here, would be the labor of a volume rather than a single discourse.

ALLOW me to enter on the service now before me, by remarking, that saints, on their departure from the body, are received by attending Angels, who wait as ministering servants to do their Lord's will. If they leave the circle of mourning relatives—if they give up connection with weeping mortals, it is that they may join the angelic choir, and sing with them the anthem of eternal praise. If they no longer associate with dying creatures, they are not left to wander like solitary individuals on some dreary coast. The compassionate, the faithful Saviour will not abandon his saints to the will of any enemy in the dark valley of death. No—he has appointed his Angels, those ministers of his pleasure, to be the guardians of his people in that hour. A guard of Angels was in waiting to receive the departing spirit of dying Lazarus, and escort it to the paradise above. Lazarus, how is thy condition changed! On earth a companion of beggars, yes, of dogs; but now surrounded with bright angelic hosts. O! the transport of surprise that must have rapt to extacy the released soul, when associated with those spirits of superior rank—those sons of God who shouted for joy at the creation of the world!—But is this all? No, the God of Angels condescends to afford them his own blissful presence. “Though I walk,” says the Psalmist, “through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear none evil, for thou art with me.” The assured hope of the enlivening presence of this good shepherd, was the support and comfort of the Psalm-

A FUNERAL SERMON. 25

ist's heart in the prospect of approaching death.— And such is the honor, such the bliss of all sincere Christians.

2. **THEY** enter into rest.—“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors.” Rest is a term of very extensive meaning. It implies a positive happiness. In the language of scripture, it denotes all manner of blessings. When the holy apostle describes the blessedness of the heavenly state, he represents it as “a rest remaining to the people of God.”*

HUMAN life is trouble, toil and conflict even to the happiest of our race. By the vicissitudes of the present life, the children of men are kept in perpetual agitation. Fatigued by a variety of toils, they have looked forward to rest as their favorite object. But though rest is the wish of all, 'tis an object which we are not, in this world permitted to enjoy unmixed. The nature and laws of our present state admit not the gratification of this favorite wish. 'Tis only in heaven that the tranquil repose, the unmixed happiness to be enjoyed in rest shall be fully realized.

SUCH as die in the Lord, enter into that heaven where there is reserved for them a sure and certain, a free and full, a glorious and everlasting rest.— They rest from their labors—from all the sins which gave pain to their hearts—from all the disorders that afflicted their bodies—from all the temptations that disquieted their souls. There they rest from all their doubts and fears—from all sense of God's displeasure—from all the insults and wrongs—the abuses and persecutions of cruel and ungodly men. Then there will be no mixture of sorrow, with their

D

Heb. iv. 9.

joy, of fear with their triumph, of doubt with their assurance, of suffering with their consolation. And to add dignity to their rest, we are assured that it is eternal.

3. THEY are made perfect in holiness. No sooner is the imprisoned spirit set at liberty, than it attains a state of indefective rectitude. Instantly it recovers its native glory and excellency. In a moment all imperfection vanishes, and every virtuous, holy and divine temper is matured. Yes, at that instant, the glorious image of the blessed God is stamped on all ransomed souls, and on their every power and faculty. Their understandings are illuminated with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—their tempers are moulded into an exact conformity to that faultless pattern of all moral excellency—and to use the stile of the sacred scriptures on this subject, “they are filled with all the fulness of God—they know even as they are known—are pure as God is pure, and perfect as their Father who is in heaven is perfect.”

HOLINESS of nature is indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of real blessedness. A disembodied spirit can never be happy, unless it partakes of the glory of God, and has the divine image impressed upon it. All those who are blessed in their death, must have the divine nature more perfectly communicated, and the divine likeness transfused and wrought into them:—a likeness at once perfect, in every part and in every degree. When God is pleased to put the last, the finishing hand, to this his glorious image, and adds to it its ultimate accomplishments, the most consummate purity shall fill the whole soul. Every feature of the new creature shall then be apparent—every character be legible, and every line of glory be conspicuous. The

divine image in the soul shall then be all symmetry and proportion. Every thing that is opposed to perfect purity, shall be excluded—every thing that is necessary to constitute perfection in holiness, shall be communicated.

O! how glorious shall the bride, the Lamb's wife appear, when she shall be presented before the throne on high, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! How illustrious her beauty, when clad with the white, un sullied robes which are prepared for her, and wait her arrival at the mansions of the blessed! How distinguished her excellency, when Christ her royal husband shall say to her, "thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee." Happy souls! Consummately happy, because perfectly holy. Glorious change! Behold yonder spotless assembly. Those glorified spirits now made perfect, were once defiled by sin, and loaded with guilt. But they have washed their garments—washed their souls and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

4. THEY shall join the general assembly, and Church of the first born that is written in heaven. The God of nature has endowed the human mind with a high relish for society. Formed to enjoy social happiness, we cannot be easy, joyful and pleasant alone; without regard to some other. Social intercourse with the sensible, the worthy and the virtuous, is a principal source of present enjoyment. Very rarely, however, does this enjoyment flow pure and unallayed. Alas! indiscretion too often prevails—whispers and surmises, jealousy and envy creep in—divisions and disputes, hatred and rage vex and torture every breast. But in heaven, the society is all perfect and the happiness unceasing. There is no roughness of temper—no diversity of opinion—no unreasonable prejudices—no opposing interests

to disturb the universal serenity. The sojourn of heaven is glorious and divine. There, ransomed souls released from the body, "shall join the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven." There they shall mingle most welcome with the spirits of just men made perfect. And there associate with an innumerable company of angels. "I beheld, saith the Revelator, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;"* And saith our Lord Jesus Christ, "many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;"† How numerous this assembly! How prodigious this concourse! There Abraham the friend of God and father of the faithful, resides—there all the children of God and heirs of glory dwell, in full possession of endless bliss.

FINALLY, they are admitted into the presence and to the immediate enjoyment of God in Christ. It is confinement to the body, that keeps the Christian out of the heavenly state. Release from that must be commencement of everlasting bliss. Absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. When nature's bands are loosed—when the long struggling spirit is released from the body, it springs into boundless day and liberty—it enters the abodes of bliss—is surrounded with the favor of God—beholds the Lamb of God who bled and died for him, arose his General, and now sits at the right hand of God on high.—With rapture unutterable, he basks in the rays of the sun of righteousness—sees the glo-

* Rev. vii. 9.

† Mat. viii. 11.

ry; feels the joy and shouts the songs of the new Jerusalem. There the divine Jesus unveils his glories to the view of every ransomed soul, converses with them all, and pours the richest blessings into every heart. Yes, there they are honored with near approaches to God, they are favored with the clearest, most satisfying manifestations of his glory, and feel the richest emanations of his love, which their capacities can receive. O what joy and peace must fill the soul, that has the enjoyment of a God in Christ, to all eternity? This is the completion of heavenly felicity—this the chief object of the Christian's desire——To this great, this high, this inconceivable happiness, believing souls are immediately admitted, on their dismissal from mortality. And a time is coming, when the body will not only be rescued from corruption, reunited to the glorified spirit and reanimated by it; but made like unto Christ's glorious body, be dignified with divine approbation, honored with a crown of righteousness, and established in the possession of that kingdom prepared for it, from the foundation of the world.

AWAKE then, ye faints of the most high God, and wait, and long, and pray, 'till you behold his glory. Press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Wrestle, and strive, and seek until you find him, and are imparadised in his bosom.

HAPPY, beyond all peradventure, happy the Christian who dies in the Lord. His soul, by an easy transition, becomes like an angel of light—emerges in the full enjoyment of immortal honors—ascends to the mansions of the blessed—is honored with the applauding shouts of angels, and the joyful

30 A FUNERAL SERMON.

congratulations of saints on high—is welcomed by Christ himself—united to that bright and numerous assembly around the throne—and rests in the full enjoyment of felicity and glory, which shall know no end. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”

ON this last clause in my text what shall I say? Not surely, that their good works go before to gain for them, admission to the abodes of bliss—Nor that they are carried with them as their security and confidence, nor as the price of their redemption—No, Jesus, the dear, the adorable Jesus, is all the believer’s trust.—His merits are his staff, when he passes through the valley of death—his merits are his anchor, when he launches on the ocean of eternity—his merits are the only riches, which his soul, when stripped of its body, desires to carry into the invisible world. But the good works of the righteous die not when their mortal life expires.—No, they shall perfume their memory on earth, and follow them by a satisfying recollection and as witnesses of their integrity, to realms of everlasting day.

LET us now close the whole with some improvement of the subject. And from the things that have been spoken we infer,

1. THAT death awaits the servants of God equally with others. No civil or religious distinctions—no greatness of abilities—no eminence in piety, can secure an exemption or reprieve.

2. LET us be deeply humbled, on account of that guilty revolt from God, which has drawn the dark veil of mortality over our whole race. How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed! Alas! the crown has fallen from our heads.

3. LET our souls bless and praise the adorable fountain of wisdom and grace, who hath, at the expence of his own life, provided for our happiness both in death and life. The consideration of this mercy may justly cause the grace-exalting—the adoring hosanna to circulate through earth and heaven.

4. THE subject as it has run its course, has suggested sentiments, designed to animate us all, to seek union to, and interest in the Lord Jesus Christ; that so we may be blessed with them who die in the Lord.

5. JUSTLY might the contemplation of this delightful subject, serve to sooth our minds, under the sore breaches, which the holy providence of God has made upon us at any time; and particularly in the lamented death of the late proprietor of this desk;—whose remains we, not long since, committed to the silence of the grave.

THE beloved man, whose death we now lament, was born in the County of Antrim, in Ireland, on the 22d of May, 1742.

OF his history I will not pretend to give you a minute detail. To do it justice, would require an acquaintance with many facts, of which I have no sufficient knowledge. What I shall say must be collected, partly from communications received from himself—partly from personal knowledge, and partly from accounts I have formerly had from the lips of his worthy father, who passed the last years of his life with you, and with whom many of you were intimately acquainted.

To those who knew him he was endeared as a man of respectable talents, of considerable information, of some advancement in religious knowledge, of strict integrity, and of real, experimental and practi-

cal religion. He lived on terms of friendship with all who were acquainted with him. Scarce a tongue was moved against him. Of the affection and esteem of those who knew him he possessed a distinguished share—proved himself an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile—spent his last days and nights in devotion—and at last, in the year 1790, quitted a life of sorrow and of suffering, and entered, we trust, on a life of perfect and unmixed bliss.

In his son, your late worthy Pastor, he soon perceived peculiar marks of genius and a thirst for improvement. This encouraged him to seize an early opportunity to place him under the means of education. His progress, in the studies usually prosecuted in private and publick schools, was so rapid, and his proficiency so uncommon, that at an early time of life, he was entered a student in the University of Edingburgh: There his application was indefatigable and his advances distinguished; and while he was yet a youth he received the honors of the University.

It was when in the fourteenth year of his age that, to use his own words, "God was pleased to send his holy Spirit to open up the glorious truths of the bible to his view, and imprint them on his heart; and by means thereof to give him a sense of his perishing condition as he lay in his natural state—to shew him his absolute need of deriving all good from Christ; his sufficiency—suitableness and willingness to save him—to effect an entire moral change of his heart, by his creative energy; and so bow his will to choose and embrace Jesus Christ in all his offices, for his Saviour and portion for ever: and to dedicate and give himself away, wholly to the Lord."

ABOUT the beginning of his fifteenth year, the sovereign God of grace, put the matter of his interest

A FUNERAL SERMON. 33

in Christ, in a satisfying light to his soul; and in the course of that year, he was taken into full communion with the Church, in the parish in which he was born.

At the age of eighteen, it appears, from the best accounts I have been able to collect, he began the labors of the public Ministry. From that period his troubles were variegated, and his vicissitudes were numerous. But of the ways through which divine Providence led him—of his discouragements, trials and sufferings—of the various changes of place which occurred in the following nineteen years of his life, want of proper information forbids me to say much. Suffice it to say, that before he had completed the twentieth year of his age, he left the place of his nativity—came to America—was settled in the work of the gospel Ministry first in Philadelphia, and afterwards in Booth-bay—where he remained eight years.

In the year 1779 he came to Newburyport—and at a public lecture in 1781, was recognized by the Presbyterian Church and Congregation, to be their Minister, agreeably to the act of transportation of the Reverend Eastern Presbytery. And since that time, Newburyport has been the chief theatre of his public labors.

You, my hearers, are his witnesses, that when his health permitted, he was unwearied in his diligence, and fervent in his zeal for serving the cause of God and religion. You are his witnesses that he vigorously endeavoured, to promote the interests of the gospel amongst the dear people of his charge, and in the Church in general.

THOSE of you, who have been visited with sickness in your persons, or families—and those of you who have lost near and dear relatives and friends,

are the witnesses of his attention and tenderness in such cases.

WHEN did he, while his strength for active service lasted, turn a deaf ear to the calls of the sick and dying? When did he refuse to quit his pillow and hasten to the beds of dying patients? When did he plead the lateness of the hour, the darkness of the night, or the inclemency of the season?

His active mind was often employed in devising plans for general utility. Instance the religious institution entitled the *Burse*, designed for the assistance of young men of piety, of genius, and taste for literature; whose circumstances needed such assistance.

His desire of promoting the improvement and education of young persons of both sexes, Newburyport will not, I presume, very soon forget. The pleasure which he enjoyed, in witnessing the advancements made by the Youth of this town, in their several studies; the Committee who have visited the schools with him, have often seen and confessed.

His friendship for the virtuous poor, and the activity and zeal with which he pleaded their cause, were too apparent to escape general notice. For them, both heart and hand were alike open. Charity, he constantly recommended, by his conduct and conversation in ordinary life—industriously he sought out objects that needed this help—and distributed with wisdom what Charity gave. And when he descanted on the duty due to the indigent, how pathetic, how persuasive his eloquence! So pathetic, so persuasive, that when one mite only was designed, many have been constrained to cast in two.

His zeal for the interests, the honors and the liberties of his beloved America, he openly discovered,

A FUNERAL SERMON. 35

on every proper occasion. In proof of this assertion, I might appeal to his discourses on public occasions, addressed to you from this sacred desk, and to his valuable writings given to the world from the press.

In the most critical and interesting stages of the late war, he willingly offered his aid in his Country's cause. An instance of this kind I will here take liberty to recite, agreeably to the account officially given into my hand.

"At a time in which the face of our affairs wore a frowning aspect, a loud and urgent demand was made for augmenting our forces in the field of war. And Newburyport was called upon to furnish a full company, officers and men for actual service. So many were the discouragements to be contended with, arising from the depreciated state of our currency, and the broken, disheartened state of our army, that the Officers and Gentlemen to whom this business was committed, labored day after day in vain. Three days were spent in unsuccessful efforts. On the fourth it was moved that the Rev. Mr. MURRAY, should be invited to address the Regiment then under arms. To the Committee appointed to present this request, he answered, that he viewed with sensible pain, the ill success of every effort which had been made, and that nothing in his power should be wanting.

He consented to be escorted to the parade, and from thence, with the whole Regiment to the Meetinghouse. There he pronounced a spirited and animating address. His whole audience was all attention, and tears gushed from many eyes. Soon after the assembly was dismissed, a member of this Church, appeared to take the command of the company, and in the short term of two hours the

36 A FUNERAL SERMON.

company was filled, and in a few days actually marched to join our distressed army."

BUT let me not dwell too long on the character of the dead, in an address directed to the living. For O! the heart-rending reflection! Death has entered this sacred desk, and removed hence the man, who was your friend, your benefactor, your counsellor—who stood connected with the respectable mourners now present in this assembly, as the affectionate husband and the tender father—and with this Church and Congregation as their Pastor. They who now would find him, must seek for him in the grave.—The beloved, the Reverend JOHN MURRAY, the tender husband, the faithful father, the benevolent friend, the tried patriot, the improved scholar, the real Christian and the able Divine is now no more: No more I mean, the inhabitant of this world—no more the active benefactor of mortals. To his once loved family and flock he is no more.—But I will not push to greater length this solemn thought. I will suppress the sorrowful idea.

BUT I cannot wholly drop this subject, until I have attempted some addresses, which are usual upon occasions like the present. But how shall I begin, how enter on this service? O thou who stillest the swellings of the deep, give calmness, serenity and self-command.

My heart anticipates the pain of addressing the bereaved mourning family, and especially the distressed, sorrowing relict of the deceased. But my duty, and the interest which you, Dear Madam, are called to take, in that dread event which has called me to stand in this place this day, bid me first solicit your attention.

I NEED not, I am persuaded, tell you, that my heart most tenderly feels for and sympathizes with

you. Too well did I know the amiable man, who, by this awful stroke of God's adorable providence, has thus early been snatched from your throbbing heart, to leave me unapprehensive of the anguish which you feel. The loss of a consort, pleasant and obliging, faithful and affectionate, kind and sympathizing;—a consort who was endowed both by nature and by grace with whatever was necessary to render the conjugal union happy; and with whom you have been happy through more than twenty nuptial years, must, we know, be peculiarly painful. But few men are capable of doing more to render conjugal life pleasant and happy. He deserved, he had your affection and esteem. But neither the tenderness of conjugal affection, nor the melting cry of dependent youth, soliciting his longer tarry, could secure him from the arrest of death.—This day it is your sorrowful lot, to out live every comfort you once enjoyed in him—This day—but I will not utter the affecting ideas which here rush upon my mind. I mean not to irritate your sorrows. To do thus, would be at once unkind and cruel. I would rather wish to sooth, if possible, your recent woes. And shall I then forbid you to mourn? The many weeping eyes and sorrowful faces that are before me, and my own feelings, tell me it would be in vain. Loud and piercing is the voice which bids you weep. But, Madam, let not your mourning-refuse submission to the will of God. Remember who hath said, “be still and know that I am God.”

God is a sovereign: He is the Lord of the universe—he has the clearest, the most indisputable property in every creature and thing. Should he strip all human beings of every comfort, they could not be guiltless in repining.

I SAID you are called to mourning. But for whom? Not surely for your departed husband. He is gone, we trust, to his everlasting gain. Let me recommend it to you frequently to recollect, the pregnant evidences of this, which have been held up before all who saw him, especially in the six last days he spent with you. Blessed be God they were so full, so convincing and so long continued. Recollect the sweet serenity of soul which was supported to the last. Think of that holy triumph with which he stated to you his hopes and prospects. Meditate the animating language in which he expressed the fulness of his heart—language which I cannot think of but with a grateful pleasure—and which I cannot repeat without emotion. “I know whom I have believed—and am persuaded, yes, am sure, he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. To him I have given my soul, my all away—and now desire to die, relying on his mercy in Jesus Christ.” The supports of true religion, rejoiced the heart of your dying husband. And our charity feels itself supported in saying, that he rests from his labors—having entered the haven of everlasting repose. Yes, you say; but he has left his disconsolate widow, and fatherless children, floating on the troubled ocean of life.—And for this I mourn—and here indeed is cause for mourning. This thought lay heavy on his heart—and affecting was his language to me, in my last interview with him:—Alas! that it was the last.—After speaking of the case of his dear family to whom he expected in a few weeks to bid a long adieu, and expressing the tenderest concern on their account, he paused—and then went on to say: “Why should I indulge anxiety for my family? The long experience I have had of God’s goodness to them forbids

every doubt of his providing for them. In his all-gracious hands, I trust my own soul forever;—and surely it would be absurd, to refuse to trust my family in the same hands.”——To the care of that gracious God, to whom your husband often committed you, resign yourself and yours. Cleave to the Lord—plead his promised mercy: He has said he will be the widow’s God. Make him your portion—let his name, his grace, his mercy be your refuge:—And may the holy Spirit, the comforter, console you under all your sorrows in this world, and receive you at the last, to the possession of everlasting joy in heaven.

THE bereaved children will permit me now to solicit their attention. Painful, my young friends is the providence with which the Lord has visited you: And we cannot suppress our sorrows—we wish not to deny you our friendly sympathy. Important is the privilege you have enjoyed. God has distinguished you with a father who was tender and affectionate—who gave you the most convincing proofs of faithful, parental care—and who spared no pains for your good—one who carefully nurtured you—who tenderly admonished and ardently prayed for you. But now, alas, your watchful, earthly guardian is gone. Your father, counsellor and friend is now no more—his parental lips are sealed in death—his friendly tongue is silent as the grave—it moves no more to admonish and direct you—nor will he any more, at the head and in the name of his household lead in the devotions of the family, or labor for your interest.—The heart of your father’s friend bleeds for you—nor unjustly.—The humane soul that can commiserate another’s woes, must weep with and for you. For by this awful stroke, divine providence has snatched from you, the guide of your youth, at

40 A FUNERAL SERMON.

a time in which you greatly needed him. Under his watchful eye and nurturing care, you have lived long enough to begin to know, how great the privilege you have enjoyed in him while living, and how great, how irreparable the loss you have sustained in his death: Affuredly you have lived thus, too long to be guiltless, if you have made no suitable improvement.

In this sad event, you see the vanity of leaning upon creatures. Let your father's death teach you to realize the uncertainty of all mortal things—the reality of God's dominion over his creatures, and your own subjection to his rightful controul.

Your father is now gone. Be it your care to comfort your weeping mother, and be mutual helpers of each other in the ways of God.—Think not that you were made for the temporary pleasure and satisfaction of one another in this world; but for himself—principally for himself, and for ends of greatest weight. Cease then to converse with empty trifles only. Intend the great concerns of your immortal souls. Your greatest, dearest, everlasting interests claim your chief regard.—To awaken your attention to these interests, a sovereign God has passed before you, in alarming dispensations of his providence. A first and second brother, and after them an honored Grand-parent, some of you have followed to the grave.—These were painful strokes of God's adorable providence. They were, however, gentle compared with this:—This has laid the axe to the root of the tree—this by a sorrowful, single blow, has reduced you to the state of Orphans.—What then remains for you, but that you cast yourselves upon the arms of that indulgent God, who is the Orphan's stay—the father of the fatherless. Be ye indeed his children. Cleave to him with full purpose of heart

A FUNERAL SERMON. 41

—devote yourselves in early life to his service and honor:—Thus will you best fulfil your father's wishes—thus will you yield obedience to your father's dying charge—and thus perform that service which though dead, he still is urging on you.—Could his cold, his lifeless lips once more address you, with what eloquence, with what persuasive energy would he conjure you, to seek an early acquaintance with religion, and dedicate yourselves to God. Before you, methinks, his blest shade now rises, and thus accosts you:—"I have solemnly dedicated you all to my God and Redeemer, both before your birth, at your birth and often since. I desire no other honors for you than his service—no other portion than his favor. I charge you to live in the fear of God, and in the sincere cultivation of true piety and virtue all your days. Then shall I hope to meet you at the end of the days, and sing with you the anthem of eternal praise."

MAKE then, a solemn pause, my young friends, and listen to this most serious call. It is now for substance, addressed to you in the language of your dying father.—Forget not his last, his friendly admonition. Be persuaded to choose God for your father: Remember God your creator—be virtuous, be sincerely religious in early life, so will your manhood be accomplished, your old age respectable, and your eternity blessed.

To the whole Church and Congregation, usually worshipping in this place, I have a few things now to say. Never, my respected hearers, shall I have another so interesting opportunity of addressing you. Could I serve the Church of God a century, in the gospel of his Son, I could not expect it. It is, by your late beloved Pastor's dying request, that I now solicit your attention. Let me then accost you in

his behalf, and in his own language—Language, we safely may conclude, which it was his wish, should be addressed to you. A more convenient opportunity for communicating it, cannot be hoped for. I will therefore make no apology while I introduce it in this place.

“I INTREAT you,” my dear people, “in the name of the Lord, ever to bear in mind, how freely, fully and constantly, the God of all grace, has made use of his holy word, most graciously to negotiate with you, a treaty of peace through the blood of his Son for the space of some years, by the labors of the meanest and vilest particle of dust: and in that time how the whole system of Scripture doctrine has been opened and defended, both respecting the law and gospel. To these doctrines, as the certain and infallible truths of God, I now give my dying testimony. From him, I think, I received them; and have, I trust, felt their weight and power on my own heart. On them I now venture my soul; and had every hair of my head a distinct soul at my disposal, on the truth of these doctrines I would cheerfully venture them all. I therefore earnestly obtest you, my dear hearers, to adhere to these precious truths to your latest breath—endeavor to understand them—live on and by them—walk ever agreeably to them, that I may meet you with joy at the last day. God forbid that any one soul amongst this most dear and precious flock, should then be found to have made shipwreck of the faith and of a good conscience—or to have turned his back on those sacred truths, which have so often, so solemnly, and I trust sometimes with undeniable evidence of the Divine presence and powerful influences of his Spirit attesting them, been inculcated upon you! God forbid that any one among you, should degenerate from the

faith, become unstable and wander after another gospel—tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; and finally be found to stand, trembling and aghast, on the left hand of the Supreme Judge.—O my most dearly beloved, defraud me not of my joy and crown at that tremendous day—let me not then be forced—O grief unutterable!!” *

O MAY this whole congregation make the best improvement of this monitory, this alarming instance of mortality! You, sirs, have lost your much loved, your revered Pastor. But O let not the word of life and of reconciliation, with which he was charged, and which he preached to you, perish from your memory. Recollect his labors of love amongst you, Meditate the glorious truths with which he sought to entertain, instruct and feed your minds. With what earnestness did he paint the miseries to which sin hath exposed you, in this world and in that which is to come? How solemnly, how affectionately did he lay open to your view, the mercies of God, assuring you of pardon and eternal life, through faith in the great Mediator—and in Christ's stead beseeching you to be reconciled to God? How feelingly did he reason with you, “on the worth of your souls, the vanity of the world, the deformity of sin, the beauty of holiness, the joys of faith, the solemnity of death, the terrors of a future judgment, the bliss of heaven and the torments of hell—explaining these high and weighty points—proving their truth—appealing to your consciences for their importance—and with all his persuasions mingling the most compassionate tears and prayers.—Now he warned, then intreated—now

* This address, the account given above of the work of God upon his own heart, together with some sentences in what is said to the bereaved Children, (all which are protected by the double commas,) are extracted from the Rev. Mr. MURRAY's last Will and Testament.

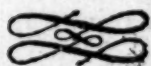
he alarmed, then soothed—now addressed your fears, then your hopes—now brought you to the mount that burned with fire, to blackness, darkness and tempest, the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words; then gently lead you to mount Sion, whence are heard the softer and more endearing expressions of mercy and love.” Recollect my friends those sacred seasons—the important privileges you have enjoyed:—Recollect them now: They will not perish forever. They will be witnesses for or against you at the end of the days. O, then, be entreated to take the present alarm, and prepare to meet your departed Minister, at that bar, where it will be known how you have improved. The alarm of mortality is now sounded from the pulpit; and he that lived for your benefit, dies for your benefit too. Dies that you may prepare for death and finally be blessed with them that die in the Lord.

WILL the young Gentlemen of the *Adelpbi* society, of which our deceased friend was the founder, and to which he proved himself a father, now give me their attention for a moment. That your hearts were affectionately attached, to the worthy, the beloved man who usually presided amongst you, we can readily admit. That you feel the loss you have sustained in his death, is easy to persuade. The loss is yours; the gain we trust is his. He has renounced the seat he occupied with you, for one in a better society, before the throne on high. And there he has attained the consummation of all his wishes.

WITH unwearied pains and diligence, your beloved president had amassed together a very considerable stock of acquired knowledge. But though it might be said he was covetous in getting knowledge, he was generously free in communicating it. His design in wishing and directing your association, might be

A FUNERAL SERMON. 45

pleaded as an instance of this—the skill with which he managed your meetings and conducted your improvement, with you will be admitted as its sufficient confirmation. O let the instruction of his life and especially of his death, stimulate you to search for knowledge as for hid treasure. Lose not sight of the object for which you did associate: Forget not the principles of your excellent constitution: Let it be your chief study to grow in grace, in knowledge and in the fear of God. For this purpose, study with diligence and care; but estrange not yourselves from the throne of grace. Read much, but pray more. Sit at the feet of Jesus, that divine counselor, who descended from heaven to be the light and the life of the world. Seek acquaintance with God—be ye indeed religious:—Religion will give you the possession of yourselves—will render you useful in life, and procure you hope and comfort in death: Religion will live, when stars and suns and worlds sink in promiscuous ruin—and thus will be a never failing source of happiness, through the revolutions of eternal ages.



pleased as an influence of this—the skill with which
 he managed your meetings and conducted your in-
 formation with you will be admitted as his influence
 and cognition. O for the influence of his life and
 especially of his death; stimulate you to search for
 knowledge as for hid treasure. Let the great light of
 the object for which you are assembled—forget not
 the principles of your excellent constitution: Let it
 be your chief study to grow in grace, in knowledge
 and in the fear of God. For this purpose, busy
 with diligence and care; but change not yourselves
 from the throne of grace. Rest in it, but pay
 more. Sit at the feet of Jesus, that divine com-
 fort, who descended from heaven to be the light and
 the life of the world. In his presence with God
 —the great indeed religion—will give you
 the position of yourselves—will render you useful
 in life, and procure you hope and comfort in death.
 Religion will live, when faith and love and wisdom
 like in precious union—and thus will be a never
 failing source of happiness, through the revolutions
 of eternal ages.

20 JY 64

A
FUNERAL ORATION,

PRONOUNCED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN MEETINGHOUSE IN

NEWBURY-PORT, ON THE 19th OF MARCH, 1793 :

AT THE INTERMENT OF THE

REV. MR. JOHN MURRAY, A. M.

[PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.]

BY JAMES MILTIMORE, A. M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN STRATHAM.

EXETER:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY HENRY RANLET;

MDCCXCIII.

FUNERAL ORATION

PREPARED BY THE REV. J. H. MURRAY, A. M.

DELIVERED AT THE INTERMENT OF THE

REV. J. H. MURRAY, A. M.

AT THE INTERMENT OF THE



[PUBLISHED BY THE MUSEUM]

BY JAMES MURRAY, A. M.

PRINTED BY J. H. MURRAY, A. M.

LONDON

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. H. MURRAY, A. M.

1853



A FUNERAL ORATION, &c.

MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW MORTALS,



T is not, I frankly confess, without some degree of concern, that any address I am capable of offering, should at this time, be immediately demanded of me. My heart too tenderly interests itself in the sorrowful event, which has given occasion for this day's concourse, to permit me to hope for that composure and self-possession which my present duty would demand. But, the request of the mourning train—the desire of the consistory of this bereaved Church, and, allow me to add, the particular appointment of the dear deceased, who was my heart-cemented friend, have constrained me thus publickly to appear in this sacred desk, and address you on this solemn occasion.

SOLEMN occasion indeed! The scene before us, is truly serious and affecting. And awful is the stroke of that adorable providence, which has assigned us the present, painful task.

G

50 A FUNERAL ORATION.

WE are called together at this time, to perform the last offices of kindness to the dear man whose precious remains are now before us; and celebrate the funeral obsequies of our deceased relative, friend and brother.

THE man must assuredly be a stranger to those tender feelings, which do honor to humanity, who can now refuse to mourn. Unsusceptible must be the heart that is not moved by the present scene. Hard and obstinate the soul, that can resolve to indulge a thoughtless moment, within these hallowed walls, and with an object so awakening in full view.

LET insolvent vivacity retire for a moment.—Let the stream of giddiness and levity be checked. Let all the sensibility of our souls be awakened while we survey that fable corse—converse a while with death—meditate the darksome, silent grave—glance an eye beyond the swelling waters of death's cold stream, and carry our contemplations forward to that pure, salubrious, uninfected region where death shall never reign—where the voice of sorrow and of woe shall never be heard—where every tear shall be wiped away from every eye.

DEATH! how solemn is the sound! How dismal are his appearances! How alarming is his progress, and how fatal! What desolation does this last foe of man spread all around, whenever he receives commission to destroy! Death rends the man in twain, and breaks the silver cord, which held the soul and body in their near connection. Death consigns our dull bodies to the darkness and silence of the grave, there to waste away unseen. At the same time it sends our trembling souls into the world of spirits and disembodied beings; with whom we now have no familiarity. Yes, my fellow mortals, it is the law of nature, or rather of nature's God—"Dust thou art

A FUNERAL ORATION. 51

and unto dust thou shalt return." Our spirits must appear before God for judgment. These souls of ours must be unclothed—they must put off this body and learn to live without these organs of sense.

ON occasions like the present, reflections upon the frailty of human nature must be fit and proper. No apology then will be necessary on my part; while I try to fix, for a moment, your attention and my own, upon our frail and transitory state, and meditate our own future condition.

O MY brethren! what a greivous alteration must we all undergo? We whose sprightly blood now circulates with so much ease! Must we forego our present enjoyments for any thing resembling that melancholy, that gloomy object before us? Must the animated countenance be obscured by pale deformity? Must the face of every individual, exchange whatever is pleasing and attractive; for all the horrors of a naked, ghastly skull? Must the sparkling eye resign its lustre, and set in haggard darkness? Must the flesh which now we clothe with care, and pamper with indulgence, become unsufferably offensive and mingle with the clods of the valley? Yes, my dying brethren—we must, we all must die.—Not a man, not a woman in this assembly can resist the hand of death, or flee his icy grasp. We must resign every ornament we now put on for the sable shroud. We must exchange whatever is agreeable in our present accommodations for the narrow, the confined, the darksome grave. Solemn thought! And yet too generally forgotten or neglected. To recal this serious reflection to our minds the most alarming admonitions are given us; both by the word and providence of God. And this day, this solemn place, this sorrowful occasion, and that death-

52 A FUNERAL ORATION.

changed countenance, loudly urge the important call. And is there a thoughtless, trifling mortal in this congregation who can mock at death or treat that sad event with levity? Here is an object which reproves your infidelity. Turn your eye thither, Sirs, survey that sable coffin—look in and mark that once familiar, now forbidding countenance—take a serious view of each altered feature. Where is now the brightness of that once discerning eye? Obscured by the darkness of death. Where is the persuasion of that once eloquent tongue? Still as the grave, that land of perfect silence. Where now is the expression of that once animated countenance? Gone, to return no more till the dawning of that promised day, when Jesus shall revive the bodies of his Saints, and make them like his own glorious body.

*“How lov’d, how valu’d once avails thee not;
To whom related, or by whom begot.
A heap of dust alone remains of thee:
’Tis all thou art!—and all the proud shall be!”*

WHAT an amazing, what an almost distracting change! But be assured, Sirs, that as God lives and as your souls live, there is now held before you a glass, in which you may see your own picture.—Here you see what you yourselves must one day be.

THESE reflections, it must be admitted, are melancholy and humbling. They have, however, spoken in perfect unison with the language of inspiration. “As to man, says Job, his excellency then goes away.” “His breath goeth forth, says the Psalmist, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts per-

ish." When the good Hezekiah meditated these things, in the bitterness of his soul he said, "in the cutting off of my days I shall go to the gates of the grave. I am deprived of the residue of my years. I shall not see the Lord even the Lord in the land of the living. I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world."

BUT the separation of the soul from the body is not the chief thing to be considered in death. The human soul is a rational and intelligent spirit. The God of nature has endowed it with noble powers, and with the distinguishing capacity of enjoying existence, independent of the body. Who then can question the soul's immortality? Or who can say that the consequences of dying to this immortal part, are trifling or unimportant? Our soul drops not into the dust, when she renounces her present correspondence with the body. No, the soul, unhurt by the body's fall, enters on a state hitherto unexplored. Death sends our trembling spirits into that world in which we must exist forever; either in consummate bliss or remediless woe. Justly God might have left our whole race to become the everlasting sacrifice of death.

WHAT praises do we then owe to our Divine Redeemer, who hath undertaken to recover our lapsed nature from the ruins of the fall! What words can express the thanks that are due to him who has disarmed death of all his terrors, and rendered all his victories of no effect! It is assuredly our bounden duty to ascribe unceasing praises to Jesus Christ the Divine Saviour, who offered his own bosom to the arrows of death. Obdurately wicked must that person be who renders not the tribute of a grateful heart for such matchless love as this. For most stupendous was the love of Jesus. He tasted death in

54 A FUNERAL ORATION.

all its bitterness, that he might provide for our deliverance from his dominion. He entered the conflict with that king of terrors—drank off the bitter cup to its lowest dregs, to satisfy the demands of justice and save the ransomed tribes from becoming an eternal sacrifice.

HAIL glorious Jesus! Divine Immanuel hail! Thou hast destroyed the last enemy. Hosanna to the Son of God, who has by the sacrifice of himself abolished death. Great was thy condescending mercy, thou bleeding Lamb of God, in opening thine own bosom to the sword of justice—receiving into thine own soul the fatal sting of death—quenching in thine own blood its livid flame, and thus working out all that contagion which it contained.

GREAT was thy victory O Death! when even the Son of God expired on the tree: And great was thy conquest O grave! when the Divine Jesus, the crucified Saviour slept in the chambers of the tomb, the prisoner of death. But dying he vanquished death. Resting in the grave for a time, he prepared it like a bed of down for all his children.

IN ancient prophesy it was predicted of him, "that he should be the plague of death, and the destruction of the grave." And lo! the prediction is most circumstantially fulfilled. Death, that merciless, that unrelenting foe, turned all his vengeance on our divine Surety: and in this his greatest conquest met his own completest ruin. The grave, that greedy devourer of human flesh which never says it is enough (to use the stile of a writer of some note) "eagerly seized the bait of our Saviour's humanity, not aware of the hook of his divinity, and swallowed its own destruction." O! how enlivening are these considerations! How reviving is a believing apprehension of these glorious truths! How

A FUNERAL ORATION. 55

soothing is the reflection, that as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, the Son of God also took part of the same, and by dying destroyed him that had the power of death! For this stupendous mercy, let us adore and worship the God of grace. For the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ, let us give thanks with holy joy, and bless the Lord with all our powers. It is the gospel's errand into our world to testify this grace of God, and assure us that Jesus by his death and resurrection, has smoothed the rugged face of death, softened the terrors of the grave, and opened a safe and certain passage to the mansions of eternal glory. It is the gospel of Christ which casts a glory even on a death bed, and spreads a brightness both on the coffins and the graves of his Saints. It is the gospel that gives a sure warrant to the child of God, even in his conflict with the last enemy, to make the Apostolic challenge—O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law: But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the gospel that enables the humble Christian to sing with the animated, evangelical Poet—

*“Ob! if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless thro’ death’s iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she pass’d.”*

*Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breath my life out sweetly there.”*

56 A FUNERAL ORATION

How supporting is the grace of God in the hour of death! How attractive are the charms which religion wears in this case! Who can behold the expiring Christian in this temper without ardently wishing to die as he dies? Who would not choose thus to resign up his life at heaven's call, rather than live in the happiest condition this world affords, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenant of promise—without God and without Christ in the world?

DEATH which was once appointed for a curse, is now to the true believer become a blessing; it is to him the messenger of God, to release the tried struggling Spirit from its confinement to the body, and make way for its admission to the beatific presence of the Lord, and to the arms of everlasting love.

How blessed and surprising are the prospects of faith! How glorious and enlivening are the Christian's hopes! How ravishing and transporting are his views! Unfading light! Rivers of pleasure! Mansions of rest! Crowns of glory! Bright angelic hosts beholding the Almighty's face, celebrating his perfections and his works, and crouding their harps of gold to the highest key! In the midst, Jesus, the enthroned Divinity, smiling on the adoring multitude, and in every smile darting ineffable joy into every heart.

THESE are the views, these the hopes and prospects which support dying Christians in the honest, trying, undissembling hour of death.—These hopes and prospects afford to the expiring saint a sweet composure and serenity: Yes, they do more—they minister cheerfulness.—They not only import peace—they make the good man happy.

A FUNERAL ORATION 57

AN instance at once suited to illustrate and confirm these remarks, is recently given in the lamented death of the truly eminent and venerable personage, whose lifeless corps we must presently commit to the grave; that house appointed for all the living.

THE God of nature had distinguished the worthy man whose death we this day deplore, with a dignified and commanding presence. His natural genius was, to say the least, highly respectable; and his acquired improvements, confessedly great, were suited to enlarge and expand the endowments of a noble mind. What nature and education thus began, unwearied application, aided by divine grace, carried to a degree exceeding the common rate. Affable and easy in his manners—courteous and complaisant to his acquaintance—sincerely kind and obliging to his friends, and accessible to all; he exhibited wherever he came, the character and deportment of the unassumed gentleman.

IN his character were combined, that seriousness which is far removed from austerity—that cheerfulness which is easily distinguished from levity—that zeal which differs widely from unhallowed fire—that devotion which favors neither of superstition nor enthusiasm—that fixedness of principle which though not dogmatical, was not easily shaken.

His religion was the result of a sound and enlightened mind, not of rashly admitted fancies; not of mistaken notions, nor marred by unhappy mixtures.—Accordingly, his religion sat easy upon himself, and made him easy and acceptable to those who knew him best.

His happy talents for instructing and forming the minds of young men, and for directing the studies of those who meditated engaging in the gospel Min-

istry, the society of young gentlemen in this place, among whom he usually presided, and those who had the happiness of studying divinity under his eye, will, I doubt not, frequently recollect with a grateful pleasure.

His ministerial qualifications will be acknowledged by those that knew him, and are competent judges, to have been truly distinguished. As a scribe well instructed into the kingdom of God, he brought forth out of his treasure things new and old. His Sermons were solemn, evangelical, pathetic and experimental. Accounting himself set for the defence of the gospel, he often in his discourses from the pulpit, opposed the progress of error, which, with gigantic strides, was gaining in the world: And from the press, in several instances, he, to use a phrase of his own, "Ventured his mite in defence of the great Principles of Christian doctrine, which have, in various parts of the land, been much exploded."

THOSE who have occasionally enjoyed the use of his gifts do know—those who were his stated hearers do know, that his discourses were fitted to do good—to inform the mind and so to mend the heart. The fault, indisputably, must be all their own, if they have made no improvement under them. It concerns the dear people of his late charge especially, to remember how they have heard, received and improved: For though their Minister lies dead before them, yet the word of God spoken by him, liveth and abideth forever.

Of his deportment in domestic life it is not my object to say much. Here, without controversy, his bereaved family are the best witnesses. The widowed mourner can tell—the fatherless children can tell—his whole disconsolate household can tell with what tenderness, affection and constancy he dis-

charged the various duties of Husband, Father and Guardian-friend. May the good Lord, who has stiled himself the Widow's God and Judge—and the Father of the Fatherless, sooth their recent woes, console them under this awful stroke and secure his own glory and their improvement.

If I have not already quite exhausted your patience, I will ask your indulgent attention while I mention yet a few remaining virtues which were, I think, characteristic of our deceased friend and brother, in which he visibly excelled.

In an intimate acquaintance of several years, I cannot recollect a single instance that discovered an inclination in him, to that unmanly, unjust, yet too prevailing passion of envy. On the contrary, he was ever easy to hear others commended, and happy in every occasion of praising them himself, his enemies not excepted.

In patience of injuries he greatly excelled. No individual in this audience will, I presume, be so unjust to me, as to admit a suspicion of a design on my part to intimate, that his character was without any defect. He had his imperfections: He saw and lamented them. And that he had his enemies we cannot deny. Delicacy however forbids me to wound the placid ear by rehearsing the pointed oppositions of public enmity, or the ungenerous declamations of private odium. It is satisfaction enough that we can with pleasure assert, that he appeared an eminent disciple of that Master, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again."

In submission to Providence, in zeal to do good and promote the gospel of Christ, I have not often met his equal. To support the cause of truth and the interests of Zion in the world, was his pleasing employment: To advance the glory of God and

60 A FUNERAL ORATION.

the salvation of precious souls seemed to be his chief delight. He served God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son. Never did he appear happier than when engaged in doing his Master's business. His own words which I will give you from a letter addressed to me in the time of his illness, will better illustrate this feature of his character, than any thing I can say: His words are these—"As to myself though still so weak as to be denied the privilege of revisiting the courts of my royal Master, yet still I am alive: I wish your help to raise a monumental pillar higher than the region of the clouds, and to inscribe on it, in capitals indelible, my EBENEZER." In another paragraph he goes on to say—"Should it be my Master's pleasure to remand me once more from the gates of death, I beg your prayers that I may at length begin to live to some good purpose. Indeed, indeed, my brother, I hold nothing worth living for but his service and honor: But without the arm of the Lord I shall still be an unprofitable servant."

It pleased God to render the last two years of his life, less comfortable to himself, and less useful to others. By a complication of complaints, and the long continued ill state of his health, he was greatly taken off from his public labors. But did he not even then usefully preach patience and resignation to the will of God, to all that were about him, by his calm and cheerful manner of enduring adversity? Those who were with him can tell, with what composure he expected his dismissal from this vale of misery and tears. His numerous visitants in the last days he spent in this life can tell, what a remarkable instance he was of that quietness and assurance which are the effect of righteousness. His more immediate attendants will not soon forget those melting words,

A FUNERAL ORATION. 61

that moving ejaculation with which he finished all he had to say on earth. * After having often repeated the cry, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly—Divine Saviour, why are thy chariot wheels so long in coming?"—He exclaimed, "He is come—He is come—He is come—and on his bosom let me lean my head."

HAVING uttered these words, with a strength of voice surprising to all that heard him, and with a fervor of soul expressive of the most ardent desires to be with Christ, he in a few moments resigned his soul into the hands of God its Father through the Lord Jesus Christ: and arose, we trust, with a WHITEFIELD, a PARSONS and a PRINCE,* to shine as a distinguished star in the firmament of Righteousness forever and ever.

MAY the dear family of the deceased, obtain a sanctified improvement of this severe affliction!

MAY the Church and Congregation usually worshipping in this place, listen to the language of this awakning dispensation!

MAY Ministers of the gospel in general, and his brethren in Presbytery, particularly, attend to this piercing call from heaven! M A

IN fine, admonished by this awful stroke of God's adorable providence, let us all, both Ministers and people, learn to die:—Let us listen to the voice of this rod and to the language of those sealed lips—They run in unison with that of Revelation—"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." O let us all, with every

* The candid reader is assured that these worthy names are presented to the public, not because it is intended to elevate them above the other servants of the living God; but because their bodies once lay before the same desk from which this address was delivered, and are now deposited beneath it.

62 A FUNERAL ORATION.

breath we draw cry to God for new hearts and for assured interests in the Lord Jesus Christ; that so death may not find us unprepared: Then may we join the celebrated Poet and say—

—“Death is the crown of life:

Were death deny'd; to live, would not be life.

Death wounds to cure; we fall; we rise; we reign!

Spring from our fetters; fasten in the skies,

Where blooming EDEN withers in our sight.

Death gives us more than was in EDEN lost:

This King of terrors is the Prince of peace.

When shall I die to vanity—pain—death?

When shall I die?—When shall I live forever?”

MAY the Almighty God—the unchanging source of mercy, graciously grant that we all may have our fruit unto holiness; then the end shall be life everlasting.

A M E N.

20 JY 64

